



Using FamilySearch's Historical Record Collection

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FamilySearch.org is a free website dedicated to helping people find and document their family history. FamilySearch.org currently has more than nineteen hundred digital collections online. Of these collections, many of them have not been indexed. This class will show you how to search the indexed collections and how to use the unindexed collections.

BACKGROUND

FamilySearch has been working to preserve the world's records for over seventy years and currently have more than 2.5 million rolls of microfilm with records from countries around the world. With the introduction of the digital age, FamilySearch is working to both digitize its large microfilm collection while continuing to capture digital images in libraries and archives throughout the world. Most of these digital images are made available online at FamilySearch.org.

In order to make these digital images accessible, FamilySearch has a large volunteer workforce working to index these record sets. Unfortunately, the process of digitizing a record is much faster than the process of indexing a record. This leaves many record collections available to the public but without an online searchable index. Digital collections that are unindexed can be used effectively to find additional information about an ancestor.

HISTORICAL RECORDS COLLECTION

Because FamilySearch is always working to both index more collections and digitize more records, the number of historical record collections as well as the countries they come from will fluctuate over time. As of January 2015, indexed and unindexed collections break down as follows:

By Region

• Africa	18
• Asia/Middle East.....	43
• Australia/New Zealand	20
• Canada	90
• Caribbean & Central America.....	71
• Continental Europe	478
• Mexico	65
• Pacific Islands	7
• South America.....	107
• United Kingdom/Ireland	125
• United States.....	898

By Record Type

• Cemetery Records	28
• Census Records.....	163
• Church Records	235
• Civil Registration/Vital Records.....	258
• Court Records	34
• Immigration/Naturalization	118
• Land Records	244
• Military Records	97
• Newspapers.....	25
• Probate Records	76
• Other.....	7

USING INDEXED COLLECTIONS

- When searching for an ancestor, don't fill in every box of a search page—using less information gives better results.
- Don't use exact years of birth in a search, add 2-5 years for variations of age in census records.
- If you know a family should be in a certain place, do a search with only the given name with an approximate birth date and locality.
- Use alternate spellings, abbreviations, nicknames, and soundex searches.
- Use wildcards in searches. "Wildcards" are special symbols used to replace an unknown letter or letters in a word.
- A question mark (?) replaces exactly one character.
- An asterisk (*) replaces zero or more characters.
- You must provide at least one character to use a "wildcard" at FamilySearch.org

USING UNINDEXED COLLECTIONS

- Navigate to www.familysearch.org.
- Use the map to click on a continent. A box will appear where you can choose either a country, state, or province. When you choose a state in the US, you will click on "Start researching . . ." You will then see a list of "Indexed Historical Records" and "Image Only Historical Records."
- You can also scroll down below the map to select "Browse All Record Collections." If you choose this method, there is a box on the left where you can narrow your search to country or time period. You can also type a place or subject in the "Filter by collection name" box. FamilySearch will then navigate to a list of all record collections (both indexed and unindexed).
- Collections listed without a camera and with a number in the records column are only indexes. Collections with a camera next to the title and a number in the Records field, are indexed collections with available digital images. Collections with only a camera that indicate "Browse Images" under records are unindexed collections.
- Choose an unindexed record collection (identified by "Browse images" in the record column) and click on the name. FamilySearch will navigate to the collection description.
- Review the information about the collection and click "Browse through [--] images." FamilySearch will display a list of jurisdictions or record sets that are part of the collection.
- Choose the jurisdiction or record set you are interested in. FamilySearch will display the first image of the record set.
- Use the navigation bar (just above the image) to scroll through the record set. Use the collection title to choose a different record set.
Use the arrows and Image number to scroll through the current record set.
- As you browse through the image, use the images tools to help enhance and work with the images.
- To return to a different record set, click the collection title in the bar above the image.
To return to the main FamilySearch page and choose a different collection, click the FamilySearch icon at the top of the page.

California, Death Index, 1905-1939 > 1930-1939 > Aabel, Arnold-Hetterman, John > Image 1 of 819

TIPS

Before you begin searching, identify one individual to research and ask one question about that person. This will keep you from getting sidetracked online. Bookmark websites or create a research log for other individuals you want to search for in collections you find.

- Keep a research log so you know which collections you searched and on what day you made the search. You can easily identify whether you have searched a collection since the last time it was updated.
- When choosing a collection to search, use the filters on the left side of the Historical Record Collections list to narrow down by locality, record type, and time period.
- Peruse the first few pages of an individual set before searching for your ancestor to determine how the collection is organized and whether the record set has its own internal index.
- Once you find your ancestor, scroll through the pages before and after it in case the record has multiple pages.

CONCLUSION

FamilySearch.org has a number of unindexed collections. Because FamilySearch continues to both index collections and to digitize new collections, the number and type of these unindexed collections will be changing. Keep checking back to see what new collections are available to browse.

Learn More

- To learn more about FamilySearch's process of digitizing records, view videos about the Granite Mountain Record Vault and the digitizing process: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KLea_DPxb4 and: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYkLKAPzCfQ> (or search Granite Mountain Record Vault at YouTube.com).
- To learn more about how you can become involved in the indexing process, go to FamilySearch.org and click "Indexing" at the top of the page.

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